

Voters Asked to Buy Duxbury Beach

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

This week, selectmen voted unanimously to oppose a citizen's petition article that seeks to have the town take control of Duxbury beach.

Selectmen said they could not support a town meeting warrant article submitted by Charles Buckley of Ocean Road North that proposes that the town take over the beach, because the town could not afford to buy it or operate and maintain it. Further, they felt the current arrangement between the owners of the beach, the non-profit Duxbury Beach Reservation, Inc., and the town was fine as it stands. The town pays \$150,000 to lease the beach annually and then receives income from sales of beach permits.

Despite selectmen's opposition, voters at town meeting on March 9 will have their chance to decide upon Buckley's article. The warrant article reads: "to see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire by purchase, by gift or by taking by eminent domain, for conservation and open space purposes, a parcel of land consisting of approximately 440 acres of land with buildings thereon, owned by the Duxbury Beach Reservation, Inc., from the end of Gurnet Rd. to the town line between Duxbury and Plymouth...."

Buckley said that if the town owned the beach it would save \$150,000 by eliminating the lease and still reap the revenue from selling beach stickers. He said the cost of the lease had risen "tenfold in ten years."

If the town owned the beach, the Community Preservation Committee could be in charge of it, thus centralizing the man-

agement and preservation of this open space, said Buckley.

Selectman Margaret Kearney, who is active on the Duxbury Beach Reservation, opposed Buckley's article and felt her colleagues should also.

"I would urge the board not to support this article, although I think I understand Mr. Buckley's frustration with the situation," Kearney said. "I firmly believe the town cannot afford to buy or maintain Duxbury beach."

The Reservation has spent over \$2 million in the past two years to repair and maintain the beach. It has a storm reserve fund of approximately \$600,000, which allows it to move quickly to repair the beach as soon as the damage occurs, said Kearney. The Reservation has worked hard to build up these funds, she added.

Buckley said Reservation got funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency to repair the beach.

The money from FEMA and MEMA were reimbursements, said Kearney, and were paid to the Reservation only after it had spent its own money. Further, she felt the town could not do a better job operating the beach than the Reservation could.

"I think the Reservation does an excellent job of managing the beach," Kearney said. She felt the way the Reservation operates the beach and balances the recreational needs of residents and out-of-towners as well as protecting the beach and endangered species has helped keep the state from trying to take Duxbury beach by eminent domain, a threat that has come up repeatedly throughout the 20th century.

Further, Kearney thought there was a good relationship between the town and the Reservation.

"Over the years, it has been an arrangement that has worked very well," Kearney said.

Selectman John Tuffy wondered how much it would cost to buy the beach. Buckley did not know exactly but said when he asked the deputy assessor he was told \$10 million, but he was not sure if that was a realistic estimate.

"Whether the price is \$10 million or \$2 million or \$3 million, or whatever, I don't think we can afford it at this time," said Selectmen chairman Andre Martecchini.

Voters will get their chance to discuss Buckley's article at the annual town meeting on Saturday, March 9 at the Duxbury Middle School gym. Town Meeting begins at 9 am.

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